

# Jeff's Jottings

## *What a difference a tragedy makes*

October 13, 2017

*Jan Edmiston and Denise Anderson are the co-moderators of the 222nd General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The Rev. Anderson will be with us at the Monday, Nov. 6, meeting of the Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area (more about that in the weeks to come, including how you can participate). The Rev. Edmiston lends her voice to us today (and regularly to the church) through her regular blog. Her words are both timely and challenging to us today; words we need to hear.*

### What A Difference a Tragedy Makes

Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. (Matthew 6:10)

A friend of mine is dealing with a terrible chronic illness and it has changed the way she parents her child. Big things are bigger. Little things are essentially unimportant. Crisis reorients the way we live.

Our nation and world have experienced enough crises over the last two months to bring us to our knees over and over again: storms, fires, earthquakes, The Worst Mass Shooting in U.S. History (until next time).

Does anyone doubt that there will be a next shooting that's worse? Does anyone doubt that there will be future natural and human-made disasters that will involve imperfect disaster relief?

### ***What a difference a tragedy makes (unless it doesn't.)***

I remember the moment when I — simplistically — figured out that some Christians focus solely on personal piety and some Christians focus solely on corporate justice. We all know people who beat the pavement for human rights but their personal lives are a shambles of their own making. We have

other friends whose personal lives are squeaky clean but they look the other way in terms of noticing inequality or oppression.

I am still shocked when self-professing Christians choose not to speak out against misogyny, racism, bullying, discrimination, and obvious evil involving our political leaders (even if we voted for those leaders). I wonder if we are reading the same Bibles.

God gets our attention in times of tragedy. There are clearly people suffering after the hurricanes and fires. There are clearly people whose lives have changed forever because of gun violence. We are jolted into caring for people whose names we don't know. And yet we cannot seem to do more than offer those platitudinous thoughts and prayers.

- Is it that we don't know what to do?
- Is it that we are overwhelmed with the breadth of the world's troubles?
- Or is it that we have carpool today and then a work project and then choir practice and then laundry and then helping the kids with homework and we just can't think about global things?

Is it that we who believe in God trust that God will take care of it? I believe this is true too, but God often takes care of it through us. It's our calling/purpose in life to help make earth as it is in heaven.

Are these tragedies changing the way we live now? Are we giving up a Starbucks or two so that we'll have some loose change to send to a disaster relief organization? Are we talking in our churches and temples that we can do more as congregations? Are we aware of the students in our local high schools who are terrified that their DACA status might be taken? Are we informing our elected politicians when we observe that they are making or taking away legislation that hurts people?

How does our faith in God manifest itself in these days? If nothing has changed for us in the way we live our daily lives in the last two months, why is that?

*Find Jan's blog online at <https://achurchforstarvingartists.wordpress.com/>.*

